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THE BENEFITS OF CULTIVATING DELIBERATE CONSCIOUS AWARENESS OR, MINDFULNESS

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Malorie Mackey is an actress, host, and writer living in Los Angeles, CA. Malorie's first book was published in 2017 and her short story "What Love Has Taught Me" has been published in the anthology "Choices." You can find Malorie's travel content on dozens of digital media platforms. Check out www.maloriesadventures.com for more. Malorie's adventures don't just encompass physical adventures. She has been a student of intuition since she was a teenager, studying at Edgar Cayce's A.R.E. In 2019, Malorie discovered the Monroe Institute while filming her travel show. Since then, she has been studying the art and science of consciousness through many different programs and life experiences.

A recent conversation I had about mindfulness inspired me to write this post. Mindfulness has become such a relevant topic because we have such trouble, as a society, staying present in the moment. Being present seemed so much easier a few decades ago, but today we're constantly thinking about what's next or what's happening in places other than *here*. Stress and anxiety are on the increase, making mindfulness an important trending topic. So, let's look at why mindfulness matters, why we're having trouble staying mindful in today's world, and how we can become more present, one baby step at a time.

Why mindfulness is important

It's old news that studies have found that focusing on the present moment can have a positive impact on your health and well-being. Studies on mindfulness as well as mindfulness-based treatments have shown that it decreases anxiety and depression in patients. This is credited to mindfulness's ability to help you stay grounded. Being mindful in your daily activities also helps you focus on what you are eating and how much you are physically moving, which can substantially enhance your health. By paying more attention to the food you ingest and walking periodically, you may find yourself feeling better overall.

Being mindful in your daily activities also allows you to pay more attention to those closest to you. Being present for your loved ones can have a surprisingly positive impact on your feelings and theirs. The more we interact with those who make us happiest and are present with them, the more enjoyable our lives can be. With a lowered sense of stress and anxiety, a better diet as a result of simply paying attention, and happier interactions throughout the day, studies have found that patients have lower blood pressure and an easier time falling asleep at night.

Why we're having trouble being mindful

With all the wonderful benefits of mindfulness within our grasp, why are we having such a hard time being mindful? This is where my interesting conversation comes in. Our increased attachment to our phones sets habits that work against mindfulness. Think about it. Back in the day (before cell phones), when we would meet someone for lunch, we would set a time and place and have to wait for them if we arrived first. We'd watch the condensation run down our water glasses, notice people walking by, feel the breeze, and be present in any given moment until our friend arrived. Then we were present with them throughout the meal. If we were meeting someone at a park, we would have to watch to see if they were coming. We'd have to pay attention to the world around us and interact with it more as we went about the day.

Today, however, while we wait for friends to arrive, we're likely scrolling through social media, checking out what people are posting or reading a news article. Instead of being attentive to the world around us, we're sucked into our phones, texting "Where are you," scrolling compulsively until we hear back, then remaining glued to our phones until they arrive. Even on a normal friend date, someone will likely pick up their phone and disconnect from being present at least once or twice, if not more.

Being so involved in our phones, according to many studies, has hurt our attention span, increased our stress and anxiety, and disconnected us from our environs. Seeing others meeting up without us can cause loneliness or the fear of not being good enough. Being so connected to everyone all the time can cause horrible anxiety. I'm not saying that phones aren't great; there are many benefits to having one. There are also many detriments to our health by constantly being on one and not breaking away. We've lost a lot of our mindfulness as a society due to this. To be mindful, we now have to focus on it, pay attention to it, and *try* to experience it when it used to come so naturally. That's why it's such a trending topic today when it wasn't before. So, how can we get back our mindfulness, one baby step at a time?

How to become more mindful

There are many ways to become more mindful, so I'll go ahead and discuss two of my favorite ways that have helped me the most. The first is a mindful check-in and meditation prior to the start of my day!

Each morning, I like to wake up, stay comfortable, and focus on breathing. I'll feel each inhale and exhale and focus on how my body feels before moving into how I feel emotionally. Living in a state of mindfulness where I check in on myself has become an important start to my day. Usually, this will move into a deeper meditation in which I begin to manifest and map out how I want my day to go, or where I try to heal and release any badness I might be feeling.

Another great way to become more mindful is in walking meditation. Fortunately, [the Expand App](#) offers new multi-day journeys, including one that is specifically a walking meditation. Meditation doesn't always mean sitting still and finding peace within. Sometimes, it can mean finding the *energy flow* within, and feeling how that weaves with the world as you embrace nature or move around gently. We tend not to pay

attention to our movements as we walk, so focusing on that can have many immediate benefits. Then, expanding your attention to the world around you and noticing the ground, the grass, the trees, the wind, and all that life has to offer in that moment can instantly improve your day.

These are my two favorite ways to add mindfulness to each day. The more we add it to our routine, the easier it is to embrace it in our lives. While technology has us fighting against being mindful, we can actively improve our well-being by inviting mindfulness in once again.